

Training Module #12:



**Contributing
In A
Changing
Workplace**

Introduction

This print module was produced by the Michigan Judicial Institute (MJl) specifically for Michigan Court Support Personnel.

The intent of this print module is to assist court employees to:

- ❖ Explore issues pertinent to a changing work environment
- ❖ Recognize reasons people resist change
- ❖ Recognize personal strategies to successfully deal with change

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Spinning Out of Control?

- ❖ Ever feel like your workplace is spinning out of control? New policies, more job responsibilities, higher expectations, and looming layoffs are common concerns in a changing environment.
- ❖ The pace of change in the workplace has skyrocketed in the last few years and is not likely to slow down anytime soon. Things are moving so fast that even those in the most critical administrative positions are often confused, so it is not surprising that the rest of us in the organization feel tremendous stress, frustration, and even anger.



So . . . How Do We Cope?

- ❖ First, it is important to recognize it for what it is. Accept that change is inevitable. Then accept the fact that you will respond emotionally at first to any suggestion for change—everybody does.! Give yourself time to process each new piece of information pertaining to any suggested change BEFORE reacting.
- ❖ Once you get your emotions under control—recognizing that this first reaction is very normal – you need to hunt for the silver lining. If you dig deep enough, you'll find that most change offers opportunities as well as threats. Think back to those times in your life that were most meaningful. You'll find that those times were most likely generated by a life-altering event due to some type of change in your life.
- ❖ When an organization initiates change, you can bet there is a good reason. SO, when the winds of change blow, recognize that resistance will cause you more harm than good and requires effort that you could invest in more productive ways. Your resistance may win a small skirmish but inevitably you are going to loose the war.



Quotes About Change

Merilyn Ferguson, *Author:*

“It’s not so much that we’re afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it’s that place in between that we fear. It’s Linus when his blanket is in the dryer and there is nothing of comfort to hold on to.”



John F. Kennedy, *President:*

“Change is the law of life. Those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

Peter Silas, *Chairman of Phillips Petroleum:*

“We can’t wait for the storm to blow over! We’ve got to learn to work together through the rain.”

Phases of Change



The way you look at a situation and the conclusion you reach about it will determine how you react to organizational change.

Your thoughts can cause you to resist or they can cause you to embrace and support any new changes. Each person interprets events based on available information and his / her background of experience, wants, needs, fears, hopes, prejudices, and beliefs.

It's human nature to look at change in a very personal way.

Phase One: *Ending*

- ❖ When change happens, we need to let go of the old ways—to create an ending with “that which was” and prepare the way for “that which will be.” If the organization is changing, you probably need to be changing as well.
- ❖ We often hear people say, “I don’t think my job will be affected by all these changes,” or “We’ve been doing it this way for years and it seems to be working! Why re-invent the wheel?”
- ❖ When an organization’s initiatives change, you can bet there are compelling reasons.



Phase Two: *Transition*

- ❖ This is the in-between stage where we are frightened and confused by the unknowns of change. We often feel so threatened by the “new” that we may seek to return to the comfort and familiarity of the “old” ways. When you are in this stage remember that it is temporary. You need to continue down the path in order to reach your destination.



- ❖ **REMEMBER:** Change cannot possibly be trouble-free. Also remember that hurdles don't prove that the changes are bad! Hurdles only signify that something significant is happening.

Phase Three: *Adapting*

- ❖ Once you pass through the first two phases, you now need to adapt the new ways required in the change process.
- ❖ Sometimes employees in this stage feel like top management has a “grand plan” that is being deliberately and carefully concealed. Most often the opposite is true. The organization may have a strategy for change but most times the details have yet to be covered AND management may be looking to you and other staff for assistance in resolving those details.
- ❖ If you're not able to get all the answers you want, maybe it's because management doesn't yet have those answers. **BE PATIENT!**



Five “R’s” of Change

Every change, while a little scary, actually represents an opportunity for growth. The very nature of change makes us look at—and *sometimes reconsider*—who we are and the direction we are heading. The following “Five R’s” can help you move forward confidently and comfortably through the change process. Each “R” will also allow you an opportunity to assess your skills and beliefs pertaining to your professional growth



- 1) **RELAX**
- 2) **REFLECT**
- 3) **REASSES**
- 4) **REHEARSE**
- 5) **RITUALIZE**

Relax

- ❖ Change is stressful. Find ways to calm yourself during those times when you are feeling the stress. Use activities such as focusing on deep breathing or visualizing yourself in a calming environment—perhaps a peaceful beach or a quiet forest.



- ❖ Try to set aside your problems. Don't let them smother you every hour of the day. Take time for a pleasant diversion even if it is only a 5 minute walk outdoors on a pleasant day. You will find that it is time well spent. You as well as those around you will benefit.
- ❖ **REMEMBER:** Keeping your sense of humor will also soften the challenges and hardships brought on by change.

Reflect

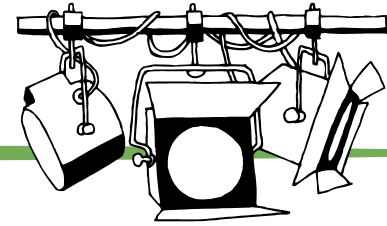
- ❖ Reflect on your feelings concerning what is happening. Why are you feeling this way? Is it fear of the unknown? How is your fear reflected in your behavior? Are you taking it out on your co-workers, family, friends? Is that who you want to be? Is this behavior assisting you in reaching your goal(s)?
- ❖ You may not have control over the changes happening around you but you do have control over how you react to those changes. You can easily choose to be negative, angry, or resentful but going around with a bad attitude will cloud your judgment and most probably hurt any chance you have for success.
- ❖ Reflecting on your feelings and resulting behavior will assist you in recognizing and dealing with the fears you face.



Reassess

- ❖ At first you may feel like a victim of organizational change. Looking toward the future, you may now feel disappointment, confusion, and worry. Don't jump to conclusions and don't immerse yourself in "what-ifs" or participate in rampant gossip that often overtake staff confronting change.
- ❖ The truth is you can't really tell yet how you may be affected by current change. Be open-minded. Seek information from those you trust.
- ❖ Volunteer to be part of the change process. Contribute where you can. Being in the midst of change process will keep you in the information loop and provide you with insights that will contribute to better decision-making.

Rehearse



- ❖ Now that you've reassessed the changing environment, it's time to rehearse the approach you've decided on for dealing with the change.
- ❖ Prepare in advance for uncomfortable feelings and situations—a very normal aspect to any change process. What changes might be considered? Where might you fit into those changes? How can you contribute in that role? Think about possible scenarios or questions that might arise. How would you respond or answer in a professional and constructive way?
- ❖ Contribute to each situation that arises in a positive way. Making it a practice to look for the positive will assist you to maintain your professional focus and encourage those around you to do the same. It will also demonstrate to your supervisor that you are a positive contributor to the organization and the change process.

Ritualize

- ❖ You are in a position to choose to be part of the solution or part of the problem. Test the limitations of your personal effectiveness. You may be surprised at how much you can accomplish and the contributions you can make in helping the organization through the change process.
- ❖ Make it a practice—a ritual—that with each new opportunity that arises you think:

“How can I contribute in a positive and meaningful way to this effort?”

Change for the Positive

The EVENT + The CHOICE YOU MAKE = The OUTCOME

Sometimes we try to exert our influence in situation in which we truly have no control. Other times we don't take a stand or make a choice when we have the opportunity to. You can be angry that it's raining. There's no controlling the weather! You can be angry that you're getting wet! But you also have the opportunity to prepare yourself for the pending rain by taking an umbrella to ward getting wet.

Take control and make choices where you can.

Let go where you can't.

Resist “Victim Thinking”

A VICTIM at sea in a storm proclaims his or her choice, “I’m going to drown.” Taking no action is indeed a choice!

A SURVIVOR at sea in a storm says, “I don’t know how, but somehow I will survive!” The survivor has hope but leaves his or her fate in the hands of others.

A NAVIGATOR at sea in a storm says, “I’m not in charge of the sea or the storm, but I am in charge of my boat. I know what I need to do in the midst of the storm. A navigator has the attitude and resolve to take action and get to his / her desired destination.



Resistance to Change

People resist change for a number of reasons:

SELF-INTEREST: When someone has achieved status, privilege, or self-esteem through effective use of an old system, they will often see the plan for change as a threat. Where the plan threatens paid overtime, people will naturally fear the impact on their bank balance!

FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN: People may be uncertain of their abilities to learn new skills, their aptitude with the new systems, or their ability to take on new roles.

Resistance to Change

PEOPLE RESIST CHANGE FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS:

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION OR DIFFERING PERCEPTION: People may sincerely believe that change is wrong. They may view the situation from a different perspective or may have aspirations for themselves or the organization that are fundamentally opposed to the vision for change. Remember that different people in different jobs will have different perceptions of pending change.

SUSPICION: People may not trust the organization or the decision makers.

CONSERVATISM: Organizations or people may simply be opposed to change. This can result from a feeling that everything is OK – the “Why mess with it if it works?” perspective.

Do you recognize yourself in one or more of these descriptions of resistors?

Success Strategies In A Change Environment



1) Be Flexible and Adaptive: The rules have changed. Careers have changes. Expectations have changes. Be open to new challenges and opportunities.

What can I do to show myself as someone who can be flexible and adapt to new challenges?

2) Know That Attitude Counts BIG!: Attitude may count as much or more than your ability to do the job. WHY? Because the job will quickly change. Today's high performing organizations require high-performing individuals who complete the job – not whine or complain and infect those around them.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE:
During the next ____ days, I will silence myself each time I have a desire to complain or whine. I will model a more positive attitude for myself and those around me.

Success Strategies In A Change Environment



3) Take On The Challenge:

Organizations today need someone who steps up to the challenge and does what it takes to get the job done. Figuring it out and making it happen will make you a valued employee.

What challenges exist within the organization where I can volunteer to assist and thereby demonstrate my skills and confidence?

4) Let Your Confidence Show: In an ever-changing environment, confidence can no longer come from the fact you've one it for years but rather will come from taking on new challenges and skills. So, step up with a smile and say, "YES, I can do that!"

Success Strategies In A Change Environment



- 5) **Be Self-Empowered:** Waiting to be told makes you ineffective. If you recognize a task that needs to be done – DO IT!
- 6) **Be A Learner:** Your value as an employee may be your willingness to learn. The constant introduction of new technologies, processes, and services, force us all to adjust and learn. Denying yourself the opportunity to learn puts you in the path of becoming obsolete.
- 7) **Own Your Career:** It's time to grab hold of your own career! No one else has a bigger stake in your personal or professional development. STOP WAITING! Take Charge.

What uncompleted tasks can I tackle to show that I am an effective and productive employee?

What opportunities are there for me to learn and gain new knowledge?

Where do I want to be in my career in 5 years?

Success Strategies In A Change Environment



8) Be A Standout: What sets you apart from the rest? What skills do you have that make you a standout? What opportunities do you take to demonstrate those skills?

My “standout” skills are:

9) Be Solution Oriented: Find the solution to the problem. You know the problems and challenges of your job better than anyone else. Call on your intellect, stir in some common sense, and do what needs to be done!

What uncompleted tasks can I tackle to demonstrate my “standout” skills?

Success Strategies In A Change Environment



10) Work As A Team / Think As A Team: Every task, every process, every day, impacts you, your co-workers, and your organization. Each action you take and decision you make impacts those around you. Share your knowledge openly. Connect and communicate!

How can I contribute to a team environment? (Put a small sign somewhere in your work space that says, “What have I done to help make this a great place to work?”)

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WORD SEARCH FOR CHANGE

ADAPTING
 ATTITUDE
 BELIEF
 BRIDGES
 CHALLENGES
 CHOICES
 COMMUNICATION
 CONFIDENCE
 CONTROL
 DISCOMFORT
 DISORIENTATION
 EMPOWERMENT
 FEAR
 FEELINGS
 FLEXIBLE
 LEARNER
 NAVIGATOR
 OPPORTUNITY
 PERCEPTIONS
 PHASES

PREJUDICES
 REASSESS
 REFLECT
 RELAX
 RESISTOR
 RITUALIZE
 SKILLS
 STRATEGIES
 SUCCESS
 SURVIVOR
 SUSPICION
 TEAM
 TEMPORARY
 TRANSITION
 VICTIM

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